

## *Introduction*

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Several hundred people have lost their lives in military conflict on the islands of Bougainville and Buka since 1988, and several thousands more may have died for want of medical attention after a government blockade was imposed in mid-1990. Except for the independence struggle in Irian Jaya, no other conflict in the Pacific Islands region has produced this level of human suffering since World War II.

The causes of the crisis remain poorly understood. This is surprising given the seriousness of the situation, and the substantial amount of social science research conducted in Bougainville since the mining complex was initiated in the 1960s. It is worrying because the implications of the crisis are serious, not least for large-scale resource-based development efforts elsewhere in the region. The major purpose of this collection of articles, opinion pieces, and book reviews, is to stimulate further research and debate about the causes and consequences of the Bougainville crisis.

Although it proved impossible to fill as many gaps in the emerging literature as hoped, I have assembled four major articles that I believe are significant. The first is a joint effort by myself, a political scientist who conducted doctoral research in Bougainville in the mid-1980s, and Eugene Ogan an anthropologist with extensive research experience on the island in the 1960s and 1970s. The main purpose of "Copper, Class, and Crisis" is to place recent events in wider theoretical and historical contexts. The second article explores various ways the prehistory of the region can be interpreted to support contemporary political perspectives. Its author, Matthew Spriggs, is an experienced Pacific archaeologist married to a Bougainvillean, who has been deeply involved in the debate about the crisis from his base at the Australian National University.

The third article is by Suzanna Layton, a former editor of Bougainville's *Arawa Bulletin* and now a doctoral student in the department of journalism at the University of Queensland. She discusses the role of the Papua New Guinea media, suggesting that they have portrayed Bougainvilleans as "fuzzy-wuzzy devils," in contrast to the image, created by the Australian media, of Papua New Guineans involved in World War II as "fuzzy-wuzzy angels." Finally, Yaw Saffu explores the political implications of the crisis for Papua New Guinea, and in the process tells us a great deal about the nature of contemporary politics there. The author has been with the department of politics at the University of Papua New Guinea for more than a decade, and writes regularly about political issues.

The Dialogue section features six shorter pieces that reflect a variety of perspectives on the crisis. Paul Quodling worked for Bougainville Copper Limited almost from the beginning, and retired as managing director in 1987. He argues that the catastrophe might have been avoided if wealth distribution issues had been adequately addressed. Next, a submission to a United Nations subcommission on human rights in August 1991 is reproduced because it states clearly the case for Bougainvillean self-determination. The response by the Papua New Guinea government follows. A short article on the Bougainville Revolutionary Army is included because little has been written about this organization, and the apolitical "rascals" who swell its ranks. The author is not an unbiased observer, however. Mike Forster grew up near Tinputz in Bougainville, the son of expatriate planters, and has committed himself to the secessionist cause as an adviser and advocate.

The implications of the crisis for Australia and neighboring Solomon Islands, and for relations between those two countries and Papua New Guinea, have yet to be explored in depth. Unfortunately, we were unable to find anybody willing to produce an article on this topic. However, we have included a short personal account by Martina Ului of how the crisis has affected the people of the Shortland Islands, Bougainville's closest neighbors to the south. We are also publishing some thoughts by Father Bob Wiley, a Roman Catholic priest who for many years ministered to the people most affected by the mining project. As is readily apparent, he has been an outspoken opponent of the mine from the beginning. Finally, it should be noted here that a number of other interested parties did not respond to invitations to contribute opinion pieces.

The aim of my bibliographic essay, in the Resources section, is to facili-

tate further research on the causes and implications of the crisis. Last, but not least, a selection of relevant books is reviewed by Bill Standish, who has extensive research experience in Papua New Guinea, and Colin Filer, who has already made some important contributions to the debate about the current crisis.

A project such as this is always a group effort. I am very grateful to all of the contributors for accepting the challenge and for responding quickly and positively to the changes we suggested. Thanks to Geoff White who helped review the manuscripts, to Charles Lepani, Ed Michal, and Mike Forster, for responding to my requests for material, and to John Roughan and Murray Chapman for acting as our agents in Solomon Islands. As usual, special thanks are due to our manuscript editor, Linley Chapman.